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### In Favor of Bill 5433 – Collective Bargaining for Home Care Workers

I am a direct care worker for three families who have children with developmental disabilities. That is in addition to my full time job as a teacher's aid at a school for 13-21 year olds with special needs. I do all of this at the same time I go to school full time to get a teaching degree as well as raising my kids.

Obviously I have to do all this work to make sure I earn enough to take care of my family, but I also do this work because I love it and I love the families I work with. That love does not mean this is not difficult and exhausting work.

I've been working with children and adults with developmental disabilities in the home and school settings for six years. Doing this work requires a lot of skill and often families struggle to find people they trust to care for their children.

For instance, there is a family I have been working with for three years who have two adult children with developmental disabilities. Both of them attend the school where I work and when we are on breaks, I spend 40 hours a week with them while their parents are at work. Soon, due to family obligations of my own, I'm going to have to take a few months off. They are really worried about what they're going to do in the meantime. If we had a registry of qualified workers where this family could find someone to fill in for me, a lot of the stress they feel would be relieved.

I don't understand why everyone – consumers and workers – don't see how making things better for the workers is going to improve things for all of us. We love the families we work for, they are like family to us and there is no way to break that bond. Having a union doesn't change that. It allows us – the workers – to have a place to go when we have something that needs to be fixed without putting a burden on the families because they already have so much to worry about.

I don't want to feel like this is a dead end job – it's fulfilling in many ways. But without the ability to ask for raises, or have health insurance or work full time the people who are the best at doing this work have to leave to do something else. How does that help consumers? How does that help workers? This is not us against them, we're all in this together and no one is going to be a better advocate than those of us who do this work everyday.